

THE A-Z OF VIDEO JARGON

An article

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By David Lowe

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Read any camcorder instruction manuals lately? Heard a news crew talking to each other? Spoken to a video accessories salesman? If so, you've probably encountered a mysterious foreign language only distantly related to conventional English. It's called video jargon.

Once upon a time, video jargon was used only by pro videographers. Not anymore. Since the home video camera revolution, strange expressions like **scrim**, **CCD** and **bounceboard** have been creeping insidiously into the vocabularies of camcorder owners everywhere. Like it or hate it, video jargon is here to stay.

If you can't understand a word, don't panic. Knowledge is power, as they say, and in this issue *Australian Videography* presents a section by section, A-Z introduction to video jargon of all types; from the everyday to the obscure, from the studios of pro producers to the living rooms of amateur videographers everywhere.

Welcome to the weird and wonderful world of video jargon!

1. LIGHTING JARGON

Barndoors: Hinged, moveable flaps. Attached to **redheads** and **blondies** to control boundaries of light flow.

Blondies: 2000W (2KW) tungsten lights with flood/spot control.

Bounceboard/Poly: White polystyrene sheet used to bounce natural or studio light into shadows, on to faces etc.

Bubble: Light bulb.

Gaffer: Lighting electrician.

Gels: Heatproof, coloured transparent plastic sheets used to change the colour of lights. Blue gels are often used to simulate the colour temperature of daylight.

Gobos: Metal stencils with patterned cut-outs. Placed before lights to project shadow patterns.

HMI: A 5000W (5KW) light. Very heavy and expensive. HMIs run at the colour temperature of sunlight.

Redheads: 800W tungsten lights.

Scrim: Wire gauze placed over lights to reduce brightness intensity.

Spun: Spun fibreglass. Used to diffuse light. Commonly attached to barndoors with clothes pegs.

Sun Guns: Small, battery-powered portable lamps. Can be fixed to cameras.

Tota: An 800W tungsten with no flood/spot control.

Throw: The distance between a light and the area it can illuminate effectively.

2. TECHNICAL JARGON

Aspect Ratio: The relationship between the width and height of a picture. Eg usual TV picture AR = 4 X 3.

CCD: Charge Coupled Device chip. Image sensing device. Replaced video tube.

Chroma: The colour ingredient of the TV signal. Made up of **Saturation** plus **Hue**.

Coax: Coaxial cables. Used for carrying video signals.

Feed: An audio/video signal carried by hardwire connection.

Feedback: (Audio): Effect created when mic is placed too close to speaker. (Video): Infinite image effect produced by pointing camera at monitor displaying output from that camera.

Gain: Level of audio or video signal.

Genlock: An electronic pulse method of linking different video sources to prevent picture rolling when switching.

Helical Scan: Diagonal method of recording video information. Used in VHS.

NTSC: National Television Standards Committee. 525 lines/60Hz. TV Technology used in USA. Sometimes known as Never The Same Colour twice.

PAL: (Not dogfood). Stands for Phase Alternate Line. 625 lines/50 Hz. TV technology used in Australia.

Pot: Abbreviation of potentiometer. A circular control knob which can vary output depending on how it's set.

Resolution: The amount of detail a piece of equipment can record/replay. Eg number of lines/pixels.

RF: Radio Frequency. Modulated signal used to broadcast TV (sound and video) through atmosphere.

S/N Ratio: Signal to Noise ratio. The ratio of a (wanted) power signal to the internal (unwanted) noise of a piece of equipment.

3. CAMERA JARGON

Burn-in: Image imprinted on to pickup tube of TV camera. Caused by pointing camera too long at bright lights.

Dolly/Rolling Spider: Wheeled devices enabling camera to smoothly glide across the ground on location or in the studio.

Dutch Tilt: Turning the camera off the horizontal to obtain artistic/dramatic effects.

Fast Lens: Any lens that can collect a large amount of light. Eg f2.8 or less.

Flag: A board or stand used to mask a light or shade the camera lens.

Flare: Over-bright areas of video image caused by light reflections.

f stop: Calibration on camera lens related to the size of the aperture opening. Larger number = smaller opening = greater depth of field.

f64: A very bright person.

In-Camera Editing: Shooting a production in the sequence in which it will be shown, with no post-production.

Noddies: Reaction shots, usually of interviewers.

Pan: Left/right camera movement.

Pedestal: A professional camera mount.

Rego/Shift: Registration. The alignment of the red, green and blue picture tubes in old-fashioned cameras.

Sticks/Legs: Tripod.

Tilt: Up/down camera movement.

Track: Physical movement of camera horizontally.

Two Shot: A shot containing two people.

White Balance Control: Adjusts colour rendition. Old tube cameras required manual WB setting. CCD cameras can perform this function automatically.

Zoom Lens: A single lens which provides multiple focal lengths. Eg a 20mm-200mm lens is a 10:1 zoom lens.

4. AUDIO JARGON

Acoustic Flat: Piece of scenery designed to deaden or absorb sound. **Sonics** (grey foam material) performs a similar role in soundproof booths.

Atmos/Buzz/Room Tone/Wild Track/Acoustic Perfume: Ambient background noises.

Boom: Pole for suspending mic.

Cans: Headphones.

EQ: Equalisation. To balance bass, mid-range and treble audio levels.

FX: Sound effects.

Lav Mic: Lavalier/lapel/neck microphone. Clip-on, omni-directional.

PZM: Pressure Zone Mic. Uses surface to which it is attached (eg wall/desk) to pick up sound vibrations.

VU: Volume Unit meter. Indicates audio level.

Wow/Flutter: Distortion in audio signal caused by erratic tape speed.

5. EDITING JARGON

Creeping Title: A slowly rolling title.

Cutaway: Close-up of action. Used to reveal detail or cover continuity breaks.

Dissolve: Scene transition in which one image is "mixed through" to another. E.g. outgoing shot fades to black while incoming shot fades up from black.

Egyptian Night Club Effect: Heavily scratched film look. Sometimes deliberately engineered to give a production an archive feel.

Frame: The smallest unit of video time. One 25th of a second.

Jump Cut: A jarring cut between two extremely similar, but slightly different shots.

Keying: To combine two video images by replacing a given colour or luminance level in one image with the content of another.

Lip Sync: Sound and picture perfectly synchronised. Also **Sunkup** (Synchronised Up).

Log: Detailed descriptive list of rough footage.

Monitor: TV set which receives pictures and audio through direct line inputs rather than broadcast (RF) signals.

SFX: Special effects.

Snow: The image on an unused tape. Random black and white dots.

Supers: Superimposed graphics.

Vectorscope: Device which graphically displays information about colour component of video signal.

Wipe: Visual effect where one picture appears to push or pull another from the screen.

6. MISCELLANEOUS JARGON

Cue: Signal to commence an action.

Cyc: Cyclorama. Curtain used in studio as a set backdrop.

ENG: Electronic News Gathering.

EFP: Electronic Field Production.

Flat: A piece of painted standing scenery.

Mark: Position on studio floor, marked with tape or chalk, to indicate stop/start points for actors' movements.

OB: Outside Broadcast. Any production being switched/coordinated from an OB van.

Scumble: To artificially age a set.

Talent: Actors/performers.

Thribble: To be vague about one's lines when acting.

Windup: A signal from the studio floor manager which tells a performer to speed up his or her delivery and draw it to a close.

Wrap: The end of a day's shooting.

So there you have it. More video jargon than you can poke a sun gun at. But remember one thing - practice makes perfect. So if you want to impress next time you're on location, don't thribble about getting your noddies mixed up with your gobos. After all, jargon was designed to make communication easier... wasn't it?

David Lowe, March 1992